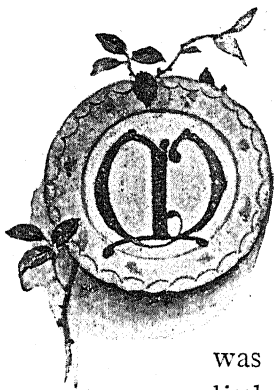


The Birthday Present.



AGGIE was feeling very unhappy indeed. She had just turned out her money-box and found she had only two pennies, a halfpenny, and a farthing in it, and she felt she could not buy a very nice present for twopence three farthings.

It was her best friend's birthday the next day, and she was going to tea with her, and she wished very much to take a nice little present with her. There would be several other little school friends there, and Maggie knew they would all give Edie something.

It was no use asking Mother to help her, because Mother always told the children they must pay for the presents they gave out of their own money, otherwise they could not give them in their own names.

"Oh, dear! why didn't I think of it sooner?" she sighed. "I could *quite* well have done without a new dolly's pram, and Mother reminded me that it was a little selfish to spend so much on myself."

Poor Maggie! It was a little late in the day to wish she had not been selfish, for her regrets could not bring back the three shillings and sixpence she had paid for the pram.

Just at that moment, when the tears were very near, something soft and fluffy jumped upon her shoulder and began to mew.

"Why, Fluffy," said Maggie, "so you've come back at last, have you? I thought you were lost. Where have you been, darling?"

Fluffy jumped to the ground and ran to the door, mewing all the time, as though she were saying: "Come and see."

Fluffy had been lost for nearly a month, and when Maggie followed her now, a long, long way, until she came to the hayloft, there she found why Fluffy had stopped away from her home, for in a basket of straw she had a family of four dear little kittens.

"Oh, Fluffy, will you give me one for Edie?" said Maggie, and Fluffy mewed her answer, which meant: "Yes, little mistress; as soon as ever my babies are old enough to leave me, you shall have one."

Edie had to wait a little while for her present, but she said it was worth waiting for, because it was quite the prettiest one she received. *Ruth Dene.*